(b) whether Jatropha lends itself to all-climate conditions, has low gestation period and high seed yielding potential;

(c) whether according to estimates, Jatropha cultivation on a mere 11 million hectares out of the country's total wasteland area of 63 million hectares has the potential to save around Rs. 20,000 crores on oil import bill; and

(d) whether Government would launch a broad policy initiative on the large scale production of bio-feedstock based on Jatropha?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The Committee on Development of bio-fuels constituted by Planning Commission, submitted its report in July, 2003, which, *inter-alia,* recommended large scale plantations of Jatropha on the wastelands for bio-diesel production. Jatropha lends itself to plantation with advantage, on land developed on watershed basis and on low fertility marginal, degraded, fallow, waste and other such lands. Jatropha has a gestation period of 2 years and it starts giving economic yield only after 4-5 years depending upon various agro-climatic factors. It has the potential to yield 2-3 MT/ha. under favourable conditions.

(c) The Committee on Development of Bio-fuels has projected that the plantation of Jatropha on 11.19 million ha. of wastelands would provide feedstock for production of 13.38 million MT of bio-diesel for meeting the 20% blending requirement, which in-turn will help in reducing the huge oil import bill.

(d) The draft National Policy on Bio-fuels formulated by Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources envisages utilization of wide range of crops including Jatropha for bio-diesel production.

Joint Action on Agriculture and Health

2264. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:

SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a new initiative to create awareness to promote joint action on agriculture and health fronts has

been launched by the Washington based Internal Food Policy Research Institute;

(b) whether Government would also propose to reorient relative public policies for closer ties between the agriculture and health sector which can be highly rewarding; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There are already research programmes on analysis of linkages between health and agriculture sector in the country.

(c) The research programme especially focus on health of female workers and technological options to reduce brudgery. The research has also focused on nutritional impact of changes in agriculture.

Government of lndia in its National Nutrition Policy has already committed to the inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure health, food and nutrition security. Agriculture is one of the thirteen sectors involved in this process.

New research initiative in the area of food fortification aims to improve micronutrient status of the community. Similarly, the crop bio-technology approach for Food and Nutrition security envisages inter-sectoral collaboration between agriculture and health sectors, to ensure adequate production.

Assistance to farmers for purchasing fertilizers, seeds and Implements

†2265. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI:
SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any loan or financial assistance is provided to the farmers for purchase of fertilizers, seeds and implement;

(b) if so, the funds provided to Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh during the years 2004-05 and 2005-06 respectively; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.